

REMARKS

The Official Action of March 8, 2004 has been carefully considered and reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The indicated allowability of claims 16 to 19, 21, 22, 36, 37, 39 to 41, 44 and 51 has been noted with appreciation. With respect to claims 48 and 50, the Examiner has interposed a rejection over the art cited at paragraph 4 of the Official Action because, as explained in paragraph 2 of the Official Action, these claims did not contain any of the limitations previously indicated as being allowable over the prior art. Applicants have now amended claim 48 to recite a limitation that is not shown or suggested in the cited art and that the Examiner has previously recognized as being allowable over the prior art. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that all claims as amended are patentably distinguishable from the prior art.

The Examiner has rejected claims 23 to 28, 31 to 35, 42 to 50 and 52 under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, for alleged indefiniteness in that a monofunctional compound could allegedly not serve as a "crosslinking agent" due to its monofunctional nature. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

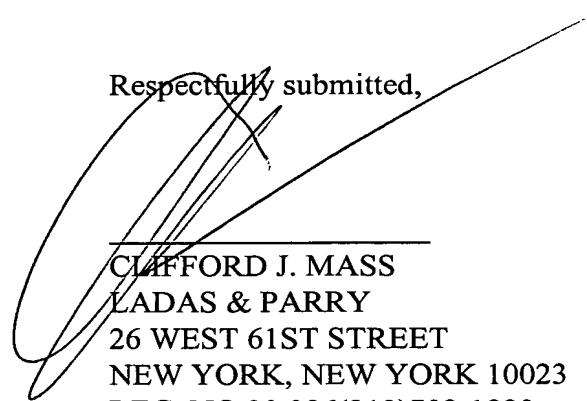
As used in the present application, the term "crosslinking agent" designates compounds that **facilitate** the described vulcanization reaction (specification at page 7, penultimate paragraph). This includes the compounds described in the first full

paragraph on page 7 of the specification, which encompasses the claimed monofunctional compounds. The term thus includes monofunctional compounds which are recognized by those of skill in the art as vulcanization accelerators. Indeed, some monofunctional acrylate monomers, for example, n-butyl acrylate, 2-ethylhexyl acrylate (i.e., isoctyl acrylate) and phenoxy ethyl acrylate, have been used in the art in the radiation vulcanization of, for example, natural rubber latex. See, for example, Jayasuriya et al, European Polymer Journal, 37(2001)93-98; and CA110:25202v (copies submitted herewith).

A fundamental principle contained in 35 USC 112, second paragraph is that applicants are their own lexicographers. They can define in the claims what they regard as their invention essentially in whatever terms they choose so long as the terms are not used in ways that are contrary to accepted meanings in the art (see MPEP Section 2173.01). It is respectfully submitted that it would be clear to one of skill in the art that the term "crosslinking agent", as used in the specification, encompasses the claimed vulcanization accelerators, and that this usage is not repugnant to the accepted meaning of the term. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the claims are sufficiently definite to satisfy the dictates of 35 USC 112, second paragraph.

In view of the above, all rejections and objection of record are respectfully believed to have been overcome and the application is respectfully believed to be in allowable form. An early notice of allowance is earnestly solicited and is believed to be fully warranted.

Respectfully submitted,


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